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AUTHOR	Russell, Linda
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ABSTRACT

The Tests of General Educational Development (GED Tests) are described. Developed in 1942 for military personnel who had not graduated from high school, the GED Tests enabled veterans to qualify for jobs or enter college. More than 10 million persons have earned GED Test diplomas since 1971. There are five parts to the GED Tests: (1) Writing Skills; (2) Social Studies; (3) Science; (4) Interpreting Literature and the Arts; and (5) Mathematics. Test questions are multiple choice, with the exception of part of the writing skills assessment. While no formal preparation is required, many people attend adult education classes before taking the GED Tests. Each participating state and province sets its own passing scores at or above a minimum level set by the American Council on Education. Tests are given regularly throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. A small fee is charged and it is possible to retake the GED Tests in the event of failure. While the diploma is no guarantee of employment or college entrance, 92% of colleges and 96% of employers accept the GED Tests as the equivalent of a high school diploma. (SLD)

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The GED Testing Program

Linda Russell, GED Testing Service
American Council on Education

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Passing the Tests of General Educational Development (GED Tests) and earning a high school equivalency diploma enables people who did not finish high school to qualify for more jobs and opportunities. In 1988, nearly 740,000 people throughout the United States, the U.S. territories, and in ten Canadian provinces and territories took the GED Tests. About 72 percent passed the tests and qualified for a GED diploma. More than 10 million persons have earned GED diplomas since 1971.

Many adult education programs, schools, libraries, state governments, and local governments work closely with the American Council on Education, the sponsor of the GED, to help people who do not have a high school diploma. This digest provides answers to some of the questions most often asked about the program.

Who Can Take the GED Tests?

Adults who are not in high school or who left school without graduating can take the GED Tests, as long as they meet other eligibility requirements set by their state department of education. Many states, for example, have minimum age and residency requirements.

How Useful Is a GED Diploma or Credential?

GED graduates can qualify to attend college, enter training programs, and get better jobs. The GED diploma, like a high school diploma, is no guarantee you will get a specific job or into a specific college. However, many colleges and employers demand at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. In the U.S., a recent survey showed that 92 percent of all colleges accept GED graduates and 96 percent of all employers accept the GED as the equivalent of a high school diploma.

What do I have to know to pass?

There are five parts to the GED Tests. They are: Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics. The test questions require general knowledge and thinking skills. All the test questions are multiple choice, except Part II of the Writing Skills Test, for which you must write an essay. The tests are available in

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English, Spanish, and French and in large print, audio, and Braille.

How can I prepare for the GED Tests?

No formal preparation is required, but many people attend adult education classes before taking the GED Tests. Classes are offered by local school districts, colleges, and community service agencies and are usually free. Teachers in these programs can help you decide what areas you need to study to prepare for the tests. Books and other study materials are also widely available at book stores and libraries. A GED preparation program is carried by many cable and public television stations.

What is a Passing Score?

Each state and province sets its own passing scores. All are at or above a minimum set by ACE. Graduating high school seniors are used to decide passing scores on the GED Tests; the test questions are "tried out" on a nationally representative sample of seniors. To earn a GED diploma, you must earn a higher score than did at least 30 percent of the high school seniors in the sample. Scores ranging from 20 to 80 are used to report GED Test results; a score of 50 is the median for U.S. seniors. Most states require an average score of at least 45--a level at which 30 percent of the graduating seniors would fail.

When and Where Are the GED Tests Given?

The GED Tests are given at over 3,400 testing locations in the U.S., Canada, and overseas. To find out about testing locations and times in your area, call your local adult education program or state department of education. Some states have walk-in testing; in others you must apply in advance.

How Much Does it Cost to Take the GED Tests?

In most places, there is a small fee for testing, and sometimes there is an additional charge for issuing a credential or diploma. In four states and one U.S. territory, the tests are given free of charge. Testing fees in the U.S. range from $10.00 to about $35.00; in Canada, they average about $40.00. In some states and provinces, there is an additional charge for retesting.

Can I take it again if I fail?

Yes. In some states and provinces, there is a waiting period and a requirement that you attend a preparation program before retesting. However, these are usually minimal requirements. If you take the test more than once, your highest scores are counted.

Where Can I Get More Information?

For information about adult education classes and test schedules call your local adult education program, high school, community college, or public library.

For information about GED Testing Service research, test development, and publications, write or call:

GED Testing Service
One Dupont Circle NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 939-9490

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